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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000332

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE (PFEUFFER)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: AMBASSADOR PRESSES PM GRUEVSKI ON
PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE

REF: A. SKOPJE 327

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 328

Classified By: P/E SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador and EUSR Fouere jointly demarched PM Gruevski May 15 to urge him to take rapid and effective action to deter intra-Albanian election-related violence (reftels) and to adequately fund and staff state electoral administration and monitoring institutions. Gruevski said he would ensure that only well-trained police patrol polling stations on Election Day and indicated he would consider re-deploying special plainclothes police units affiliated with eAlbanian coalition partner DPA. Following the meeting, Gruevski also acted promptly, albeit belatedly to ensure adequate funding and authorization for the State Electoral Commission and Broadcasting Council to hire additional staff to conduct election administration and media monitoring. He was non-committal on the request to remove from the list of coalitions a "clone party" whose sole purpose, based on a party and candidates' names nearly identical to SDSM's, is to mislead voters and cost SDSM support on Election Day. End summary.

EU-US MESSAGE: END THE VIOLENCE

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Ambassador and EUSR Fouere jointly demarched PM Gruevski May 15 to convey their concerns regarding recent election-related intra-ethnic violence and intimidation between eAlbanian DUI (main opposition) and governing coalition partner DPA (ref A). The Ambassador warned that the incidents already were calling into question NATO's Bucharest Summit assessment that Macedonia had met membership criteria. She urged Gruevski to ensure the Ministry of Interior took immediate action to investigate the incidents and prosecute the perpetrators, and to prevent further violence. EUSR Fouere complained about the weak GOM response to date, and called for "radical action" to address the problem.

[1](#)3. (C) Gruevski agreed there had been "too much violence at the beginning of the campaign" season. He had spoken to both DPA President Thaci and to DUI President Ahmeti earlier in the week and had asked them to stop the violence. He had told Thaci, specifically, that state institutions would not protect DPA supporters who engaged in such acts. In the end,

DPA's action would only benefit DUI while damaging Macedonia's interests.

¶4. (C) Gruevski said Thaci would not admit that his supporters had shot at Ahmeti's car in a May 12 incident DUI had labeled an assassination attempt. The Prime Minister noted that Macedonian police had arrested one suspect in the incident, and that another had turned himself in. Thaci had complained that he had to press the Kosovars not to send reinforcements to DUI, and that DUI supporters had threatened him during campaign rallies in some villages. He pledged, however, not to cause trouble on Election Day.

¶5. (C) Ahmeti had agreed, the PM continued, not to retaliate DPA attacks. But Ahmeti also had pressed Gruevski for a more level playing field for DUI campaign activities. The DUI leader had complained in particular about DPA supporters having cut off the electricity to a major DUI rally in Tetovo that week.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

¶6. (C) Gruevski assured the Ambassador and EUSR Fouere that the Ministry of Interior (MOI) would arrest, "without hesitation," any suspects in such incidents. The MOI also would ensure that only the "best-trained police would be sent to potential hot spots" on Election Day. Gruevski would also ensure that VMRO monitors were present at polling stations to help restrain DPA hotheads.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador told Gruevski that there was little

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international community confidence in the MOI's Alpha plainclothes police units. She noted that Deputy MOI El-Mazi's hiring practices had led to a preponderance of DPA-affiliated hirees in the ranks of the Alphas operating in northwest Macedonia. That undermined confidence in the Alphas' even-handedness, and there were reasons to suspect they were involved in some of the violence targeting DUI. She urged that Gruevski ensure the Alphas were constituted of only qualified, professional police, and suggested that Alpha units be kept away from polling stations on Election Day.

¶8. (C) Gruevski said he had considered redeploying the Alphas from northwestern Macedonia, but was concerned that Thaci's DPA might react with even more radical steps. He said that Deputy MOI El-Mazi was now isolated in the MOI, suggesting he might be less of a troublemaker than previously. Gruevski agreed, however, to discuss with Thaci the idea of an Alpha unit redeployment.

FUNDING AND STAFFING FOR STATE ELECTORAL BODIES

¶9. (C) The Ambassador and Fouere also urged Gruevski to ensure adequate funding for the State Electoral Commission (SEC) to hire adequate staff to carry out its electoral administration duties. They also pressed for funding for the Broadcasting Council to hire staff to conduct monitoring of media during the campaign. Gruevski responded immediately, directing his Chief of Staff to ensure both bodies would have the funding and authority needed to hire adequate staff.

ELIMINATING THE CLONE PARTY

¶10. (C) The Ambassador urged Gruevski to take steps to remove the SDPM party -- a party with a name similar to the main opposition SDSM, and whose candidates had names virtually identical to SDSM's candidates in five electoral districts -- from the official list of coalitions (reftels). The SDPM's sole purpose, she asserted, was to mislead and confuse voters. Gruevski replied that there was little he could do about the party, since it was legally registered.

He noted that another party, VMRO-DP, was a one-man show intent on capturing some of Gruevski's party's supporters, but that there was nothing that legally could be done to stop them.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Gruevski clearly is aware of the damage the violent incidents of the past two weeks have done, and could still do, to Macedonia's reputation and democratic credentials. He appears willing to take action to deter further violence, but shows a lot of hesitation regarding how to handle the security challenge that Thaci poses. Despite the arrest and detention of two suspects in the May 12 shooting incidents, however, both DUI and DPA alleged the other had attacked party offices, in Tetovo and Glogi, over the May 17-18 weekend. The police reportedly are preparing to arrest suspects in the weekend attack on the DUI office in Tetovo. Rapid prosecutions and convictions are necessary deterrents. Gruevski may need to take further steps, such as threatening to leave Thaci out of the coalition, to keep the situation under control.

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